

2019 Bulldog Outdoor Track & Field

Georgia Men Notch Third Straight Top-6 National Outdoor Finish



Performance Features Third NCAA Decathlon Title, Historic Three-Event Scorer In Comenentia

In 2018, the Georgia women captured their first NCAA indoor title in history and the Bulldog men secured their first national outdoor crown. A year later, familiar faces from the men's championship run collected their third consecutive top-six national outdoor finish while a fresh batch of names on the women's side scored for the 10th outdoor season in a row and for the 24th time in the last 25 years. In fact, the fourth-place finish for the Georgia men locked down UGA's 10th top-four NCAA trophy for head coach **Petros Kyprianou** since he took over the program in 2016.

Just as he did in 2018, senior **Denzel Comenentia** led the Bulldogs at the NCAA Outdoor Championships by scoring a combined 16 points in a record-setting three events at his final meet in red and black. This point total, which ranked fourth individually out of the field's competitors, came from a runner-up finish in the shot put and fifth-place finishes in both the hammer throw and the discus. His final toss as a Bulldog was a personal record (196 feet, 9 inches) in the discus, which boosted his finish from sixth to fifth and helped bump Georgia from fifth to its coveted top-four finish. This made him the first scoring All-American in the discus for the Bulldogs since Lucais MacKay in 2004.

The *U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Co-South Region Men's Field Athlete of the Year* completed his career as a 13-time First Team All-American (seven outdoors), 2018 NCAA champion in both the shot and hammer and an eight-time Southeastern Conference Champion (five outdoors). He wrapped up his time in Athens at No. 2 on the all-time lists in the shot (68-6), discus (196-9) and hammer (252-0).

Sophomore **Johannes Erm** tallied 10 points of his own in a single event. The Tallinn, Estonia, native improved his 2018 third-place finish in the decathlon to a winning performance in 2019 to give the Bulldogs' their third title in the event since 2014. Erm had five personal bests in his 10 events to score the second-best score in UGA history (8,352 points), a mark that also secured him the 2020 Olympic standard score of at least 8,350.

The Bulldogs also combined for 6.5 points in the high jump thanks to senior **Keenon Laine's** fourth-place showing and junior **Darius Carbin's** tie for seventh. For Laine, it marked his fourth scoring outdoor All-American finish (three with Georgia, one with Western Kentucky) as he matched his season-best effort of 7-4.25. Carbin, who was making his debut at the outdoor Nationals, tied his career best at 7-3 to add a pivotal 1.5 points to Georgia's total late in the meet.

While the Bulldog men traveled three seniors, a junior and a sophomore to Austin, Texas, for Nationals, the Lady Bulldogs had three freshmen, a sophomore and three juniors who punched their ticket to the NCAA meet. Sophomore **Aliyah Whisby**, a first-timer at the meet with the Georgia women, traveled 21-0 in the long jump and scored the Lady Bulldogs a point to give them a tie for 66th. A First Team All-American indoors in the pentathlon in 2019 for UGA, Whisby advanced to the 2018 NCAA outdoor meet in the heptathlon while competing for Kennesaw State.

Final Ranking: Men - 4th (32.5 pts.), Women - T-66th (1 pt.)

2019 Schedule / Results		
Date	Event (Location)	Results
3/15-16	Yellow Jacket Invite (Atlanta, Ga.)	NTS
3/28-30	Florida Relays (Gainesville, Fla.)	NTS
3/29-30	Raleigh Relays (Raleigh, N.C.)	NTS
4/5-6	Spec Towns Invite (ATHENS) Bulldog Decathlon/Heptathlon	NTS
4/18-20	Mt. SAC Relays (Torrance, Calif.)	NTS
4/19	Georgia Tech Invite (Atlanta, Ga.)	NTS
4/19-20	Beach Invite (Long Beach, Calif.)	NTS
4/26-27	Torrin Lawrence Memorial (ATHENS)	NTS
5/9-11	SEC Championships (Fayetteville, Ark.)	M-9 (43), W-10 (42.5)
5/23-25	NCAA East Prelims (Jacksonville, Fla.)	12 qualifiers
6/5-8	NCAA Championships (Austin, Texas)	M-4 (32.5), W-T-66 (1)
NTS - No Team Score		

Bulldog Postseason Awards

SEC Men's Co-Freshman Runner of the Year - **Elija Godwin**
USTFCCCA Co-South Region Men's Field Athlete of the Year - **Denzel Comenentia**

Two of the Georgia freshmen had memorable debuts at the meet. **Sterling Lester** scored a personal record 5,694 points in the heptathlon, thanks in part to equaling or setting four fresh career bests, to finish 11th. **Titiana Marsh** overcame a mid-week practice injury to her ankle and took off for a mark of 43-0.50 on her third try to finish 15th and gain valuable experience for the future.

Since Erm and Lester automatically qualified for Nationals with their combined event scores during the season, the Bulldogs arrived at the NCAA Championships after qualifying 10 student-athletes in a total of 12 events at the NCAA East Prelims. In addition to the competitors already highlighted, junior **Amber Tanner** (800 meters), junior **Jessica Drop** (5000m), junior **Kayla Smith** (pole vault), freshman **Sakari Famous** (high jump) and senior **Michael Nicholls** (110m hurdles) finished in their event's top 12 to advance.

Famous slid into the NCAA meet with a clearance of 5-8.75 at Prelims after sitting at No. 38 on the national list with a 5-10 clearance earlier in the year. On the men's side, Nicholls clocked a personal record 13.61 at the Prelims before matching that time during the semifinals of the NCAA Championships to end his career.

Georgia completed the SEC Championships in ninth and 10th place (men and women, respectively) and saw Comenentia win his third outdoor SEC shot put title in a row. Also taking second in both the discus and hammer, the Amsterdam native finished with 26 points and earned the meet's Commissioner's Trophy for the second straight year as the top scorer on the men's side. Other highlights from the meet included:

- * Tanner running a 2:05.01 for runner-up honors in the 800m final.
- * Drop battling for a third-place finish in the 5000m after completing her laps in 15:54.58.
- * Lester earning a third-place finish in the heptathlon after totaling 5,534 points through seven events.
- * In his final meet as a Bulldog, senior **Jonathan Pel-**

NCAA Indoor All-Americans

- * So. **Johannes Erm** - Decathlon - 1st (*18,352 pts.)
- * Sr. **Denzel Comenentia** - Shot Put - 2nd (68-1.75)
- * Sr. **Keenon Laine** - High Jump - 4th (7-4.25)
- * Sr. **Denzel Comenentia** - Discus - 5th (!196-9)
- * Sr. **Denzel Comenentia** - Hammer Throw - 5th (239-3)
- * Jr. **Darius Carbin** - High Jump - T-7th (17-3)
- * So. **Aliyah Whisby** - Long Jump - 8th (21-0)
- # Sr. **Michael Nicholls** - 110mH - 10th (!13.61)
- # Fr. **Sterling Lester** - Heptathlon - 11th (!5,694 pts.)
- # Fr. **Titiana Marsh** - Triple Jump - 15th (43-0.50)
- & Jr. **Amber Tanner** - 800m - 18th (2:05.57)
- & Jr. **Jessica Drop** - 5000m - 19th (16:40.84)
- & Jr. **Kayla Smith** - Pole Vault - T-19th (13-3.50)
- & Fr. **Sakari Famous** - High Jump - 21st (5-7)
- * First Team All-American; #Second Team All-American; & Honorable Mention All-American; !Personal Record; ^No. 6 all-time collegiate performer, No. 10 all-time collegiate performance, Olympic standard

SEC Outdoor Champion

Sr. **Denzel Comenentia** - Shot Put (65-7)

ham leaning at the line to finish seventh and score in the 3000m steeplechase for the first time in his career.

* Freshman **Karel Tilga** finishing as the runner-up in the decathlon as he continued his recovery and rehab from an arm injury earlier in the year.

* Freshman **Ziggy Zoller** competing in his first decathlon and taking sixth to boost the Bulldogs' total by three points.

Georgia finished the outdoor season by making 21 improvements to the school's all-time top-10 lists, including six No. 2 spots in the Bulldog record books.

Despite not having the opportunity to run in the postseason, true freshman **Elija Godwin** was still voted the *SEC Men's Co-Freshman Runner of the Year* in his first season as a Bulldog sprinter. He won seven regular season races in either the 100m, 200m or 400m and finished No. 7 on the school's all-time 400m list (45.92) and No. 9 in the UGA record books in the 200m (20.59). Godwin, a native of Covington, Ga., was injured during practice in Athens the week of the SEC Championships when he backed into a stationary javelin that was resting implanted in the ground. He underwent surgery and is on pace to make a full recovery and return to the Bulldog lineup.